

Sunday 16th October 22

How God deals with broken people

1 Kings 19:1-18

Elijah Flees to Horeb

19 Now Ahab told Jezebel everything Elijah had done and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. ² So Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah to say, "May the gods deal with me, be it ever so severely, if by this time tomorrow I do not make your life like that of one of them."

³ Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there, ⁴ while he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness. He came to a broom bush, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, LORD," he said. "Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors." ⁵ Then he lay down under the bush and fell asleep.

All at once an angel touched him and said, "Get up and eat." ⁶ He looked around, and there by his head was some bread baked over hot coals, and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then lay down again.

⁷ The angel of the LORD came back a second time and touched him and said, "Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you." ⁸ So he got up and ate and drank. Strengthened by that food, he travelled forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God. ⁹ There he went into a cave and spent the night.

The LORD Appears to Elijah

And the word of the LORD came to him: "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

¹⁰ He replied, "I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too."

¹¹ The LORD said, "Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by."

Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. ¹² After the earthquake came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. ¹³ When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave.

Then a voice said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

¹⁴ He replied, "I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too."

¹⁵ The LORD said to him, "Go back the way you came, and go to the Desert of Damascus. When you get there, anoint Hazael king over Aram. ¹⁶ Also, anoint Jehu son of Nimshi king over Israel, and anoint Elisha son of Shaphat from Abel Meholah to succeed you as prophet. ¹⁷ Jehu will put to death any who escape the sword of Hazael, and Elisha will put to death any who escape the sword of Jehu. ¹⁸ Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel—all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and whose mouths have not kissed him."

2 Corinthians 12:1-10

Paul's Vision and His Thorn

12 I must go on boasting. Although there is nothing to be gained, I will go on to visions and revelations from the Lord. ² I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know—God knows. ³ And I know that this man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows—⁴ was caught up to paradise and heard inexpressible things, things that no one is permitted to tell. ⁵ I will boast about a man like that, but I will not boast about myself, except about my weaknesses. ⁶ Even if I should choose to boast, I would not be a fool, because I would be speaking the truth. But I refrain, so no one will think more of me than is warranted by what I do or say, ⁷ or because of these surpassingly great

revelations. Therefore, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. ⁸ Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. ⁹ But he said to me, “**My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.**” Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. ¹⁰ That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Sermon: How God deals with broken people

[It would be great to have your Bibles opened at 1 Kings chapter 19 – starting at verse 1– let me pray before we begin]

Intro

In this morning’s Bible passage, we find a **very broken prophet Elijah**

So, before we go any further, we should **define brokenness**

[Slide 1-Brokenness Definition]

Brokenness: *A condition in which something is badly damaged and unable to continue or work correctly.*

They are **many reasons** why a **person** could be **broken**

- For example – when we experience the **loss of a loved one** – or the **loss of a relationship** which we valued highly – or the **loss of independence** (like having to move into aged care) – or the **loss of possessions** through a **fire** or **flood** – we can only imagine what the **people of Lismore must feel** like after two/three floods this year – and we can only imagine what the **people affected by bush fires** might feel like– we can only imagine what the **people of Ukraine and Russia** might feel like – many of them would be broken
- We could be broken by **PTSD** – Post Traumatic Stress Disorder – **traumatised by** a terrible **past event** in our life
- We could be broken by being a **victim of abuse or a crime** committed against us

- Or we could be broken by the **cumulative effect of too many major trials** all at once – let's face it in the past two-three years we've been affected by **fires, heavy rains, floods and a worldwide pandemic** – and we're all suffering a bit from post-covid (if it is post?) – **post-covid trauma and exhaustion!** We can only imagine how **frontline workers** like doctors and nurses **are going?**

Brokenness can have us feeling like there's **no hope** – and that **we're all alone** – and that we're **too weak to keep going**

Which brings us to – **Elijah** the Prophet

Let's **remind ourselves** what Elijah's been through so far

- Back in chapter 16 – He **announced a drought to** bad King **Ahab** because of Israel's disobedient worship of the false god Baal
- Then **God sent Elijah to the East of Jordan** – and he was **fed by ravens** – who gave him **bread and water**
- Then **God sent Elijah to Zarephath** in the coastal region of Sidon to a poor **widow** – down to her **last meal** – and this widow was supposed to somehow take care of Elijah
- Which she does – thanks to a **never-ending jar of flour** and a **never-ending jar of oil**
- And just when Elijah thought things were on the up
- The **widow's son dies** – and Elijah's thinking – **WHAT? Are you kidding God?**
- With God's help – **Elijah brings the boy back to life**
- Then **God tells Elijah** after 3 ½ years that the **drought will be over soon** and **rain will come** again
- And **Elijah challenges** King Ahab and his **false prophets of Baal** to a **God-contest** on Mount Carmel – **to prove who the real God is!**
- The **contest is spectacular** and **Elijah wins** and **discredits** the false **prophets** and **discredits Baal** as a false god
- Elijah then orders these **false prophets to be killed**
- And again, just when Elijah thinks things are on the up – and he expects the rain to come – he **has to pray seven times** before **God answers** and sends the rain – this is **agonising for Elijah**

- And we finished up last week – with **Elijah running ahead of Ahab** all the way from Mount Carmel to Jezreel.
- Again, Elijah might be thinking things are on the up
- But let's face it – it's been a **roller coaster ride for Elijah**
- After 3-4 years of this sort of stuff – he's **probably exhausted!**

What we're about to see is that **Elijah is actually broken**

So, this morning we **going to look at - *How God deals with broken people.***

[Slide 2-Heading]

1. 1st - When we are broken – **we feel like giving up** – that's verses 1 to 5a
2. 2nd - When we are broken – **God gives us what we need** – not what we want **but what we need** – that's verses 5b-17
3. 3rd - When we are broken – **God shows us grace** – that's verse 18

When we are broken – we feel like giving up (1 Kings 19:1-5a)

So first then – when we are broken – **we feel like giving up**

[Slide 2a-giving up]

As we pick up the story from v1 – of 1 Kings 19

We would have expected that when King Ahab told his wife Jezebel **what Elijah and His God had done on Mount Carmel** and how Elijah **killed all the false prophets** of Baal – that **Jezebel might have abandoned her worship of Baal!**

But no! **Jezebel is not convinced by the truth!** Her **eyes are blind** to the truth – her **ears are deaf** to the truth. Her **heart is hard** towards God!

Application: It's the same sometimes when we tell people about Jesus – just because we have the truth – and can give clear scripture references and evidence about Jesus – does not mean everyone is going to listen and turn to Jesus. Jezebel is our teacher here about **what the human heart is like.** Sometimes people reject the Lord despite the evidence.

Instead of quitting her Baal worship – **Jezebel issues a death threat to Elijah** in v2.

Elijah was perhaps thinking that now all these false prophets had been wiped out – that was the **end of the matter.**

But when Elijah hears Jezebel's death threat – v3 – he is afraid – and runs for his life.

He **runs from Jezreel to Beersheba** - the southernmost part of the kingdom of Judah – about 100 miles (160km) – that's **far enough away to be safe from Jezebel.**

But he's exhausted and broken – and v4 – he **takes himself off alone** into the **wilderness** and he **prays.**

It's a **desperate prayer** – a sad prayer – a prayer of broken man –

“I have had enough, Lord” – “Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors” – then he **fell asleep under a bush** – and **hoped he'd wake up dead!**

What's going on for Elijah?

We can say he **doesn't really want to die** – otherwise he **could have stayed in Jezreel** and **Jezebel would have organised his death!**

We can also see Elijah is **discouraged**; he feels he's **done all he can in his ministry** – and **it's not working** – he feels **he's a failure** and **is no more successful than those before him** – and humanly speaking he **can't see a way forward.**

Which is our first point - when we are broken – **we feel like giving up** – don't we?

Application: I'm sure some of us – have even felt like Elijah at times and said – *“I've had enough Lord – I can't go on – I'd be better off dead – what am I doing here – I'm a failure – I feel all alone”*

Personally – the last few years in ministry have **been a nightmare at times** – I can really relate to Elijah.

When we're exhausted and broken – we **can overstate the case a bit** – can't we?

(pause)

Elijah's head-space is understandable.

But it has a **few flaws** in it...

Application: Elijah has perhaps **forgotten that it's not HIS ministry** – it's the Lord's ministry. He's underestimated what has been achieved. He perhaps **felt everything depended upon him** – and not the Lord. We can be like that – can't we? I know I can?

(pause)

Application: also, **Elijah forgot** that when we pray – **it has to be according to God's will** – as we learnt last week. We need to remember that when we pray too – don't we?
It's **not God's plan** for Elijah to die – **God still has plans** for him!

When we are broken – God gives us what we need – not what we want (1 Kings 19:5b-17)

Which brings us to our second point – when we are broken – **God gives us what we need – not what we want**

[Slide 2b-what we need]

Elijah **wants to die**

But that's not what he needs

Physical needs (vv5b-9)

Look at v5 – **God is so gracious**

He **sends Elijah** a very **unusual alarm clock** – an angel who says “*wakey wakey – it's time for breakfast*”

Look at v6 – I wouldn't mind waking up to some **hot bread next to my pillow!**

But remember **Elijah is exhausted** – he **wolfs down breakfast** and **goes back to sleep.**

So, **God sends the angel alarm clock** a second time – v7 – with **more food and drink**

What **God** is doing here is providing for the physical needs of Elijah

V8 tells us that **Elijah** has been **strengthened** because he has another **long journey ahead** of him – 40 days/nights to be exact – because **Elijah is going to God's Mountain** – **Mount Horeb** – aka Mount Sinai

It may have been **Elijah's idea to run away to Beersheba** – and then to die.

But **God's plan is hugely different.**

God has physically restored Elijah because **God wants to take him to the special place of Mount Horeb** – where **Elijah can also be spiritually restored.**

We should get excited by the fact that God brings Elijah to **Mount Horeb/Sinai.**

It's no coincidence this is the place where: God appeared in a **burning bush to Moses** (Exodus 3) and where God gave Moses the **10 commandments** (Exodus 20) and it's where **Moses spent 40 days/nights with God** (Exodus 24:18 and Deuteronomy 9:9-11).

God's is about to **provide** for **Elijah's spiritual needs!**

Spiritual needs (vv10-17)

God asks Elijah a question at the end of v9 and the same question again at the end of v13 *"What are you doing here, Elijah?"*

Given the location – and the context – God's **not accusing** Elijah of being in the **wrong place** – God's the one who has brought him here.

God's question is more like *"Why do you think you're here, Elijah? Why do you think you're on the same mountain where I dealt with Moses?"*

Elijah replies to God's question in exactly the **same way in v10 and in v14.**

Given God's response to Elijah later – we **have to read** Elijah's reply – **not as self-pity** – but **more like** an **honest assessment** of someone who has been through the mill.

Elijah tells God (v10/v14):

- That he has **been zealous for God** – that's certainly true!
- That the **Israelites have rejected God** – they've **trn down God's altars** – and they've **killed God's prophets** – that's certainly true!
- And that **he's the only one left** [he believes that but has forgotten about Obadiah for one] – and they're after him too!

Application: Elijah is **being honest** with God **about how he feels** – and it's okay for us to be honest with God in our prayers.

But **Elijah** is saying how he feels about the **people of Israel rejecting God**. It has **really affected** Elijah!

Application: What about us? Do we get **despondent or distressed** for God's sake, like Elijah? Are we saddened and concerned about the **state of our world**? Are we affected by the **decline in Christianity in our nation**? About the **lack of interest in Jesus** in our community? Have we had an honest talk with God about it?

God listens to Elijah – God understands how Elijah feels – so God provides for His spiritual needs

See **verses 11 to 13**

It's an **amazing scene** – of **Elijah standing on the mountain** as the Lord has commanded him to do.

And the **Lord sends a great and powerful wind** – but the Lord is not in the wind. Then He **sends an earthquake** – but the Lord is not in the earthquake. **Then a fire** – but the Lord is not there either.

It's amazing that Elijah is still standing!

God demonstrates His power over all creation – and sometimes He speaks through His creation and through many signs and wonders.

But that's not what Elijah needs – instead God speaks through a gentle whisper (v12).

It's like God is saying *“Elijah you can't put limitations on me – the people of Israel are following a false god Baal who they think controls the weather. But I'm the one true God – I can act and speak through the weather or through all sorts of phenomena like fire and earthquakes if I want – but I'm not limited to that. And I choose to talk to you Elijah – gently in a whisper – because you are broken – and you need gentleness right now”*

When we are broken - God gives us what we need.

It's like God is saying as Psalm 46:1 says **“Be Still, Elijah – and know that I am God”**

Application: It's a reminder for us to firstly – listen out for God's gentle whisper when we're broken – like when I heard God whisper to me – **“your Dad has died – but you have a heavenly Father who will always be with you”** – or like when God whispers gently to me as I'm driving: “Paul, you need to phone this person now, they need a prayer and a word of encouragement”. It's a reminder secondly – of where we need to go when we are broken – back to God's Word – and get some **spiritual food** – remind ourselves of what Jesus has done – remind ourselves of God's promises and how God deals with broken people!

God also knows that Elijah needs some encouragement – and it comes in **verses 15 to 17**.

God tells Elijah his **ministry is not finished yet!**

- **Elijah is to go** right up north to **Damascus in Syria** – and **anoint Hazael as King of Aram** (aka Syria)
- Elijah is to also **anoint Jehu as King of Israel** – to replace the wicked King Ahab
- And Elijah is to go and **appoint his successor – Elisha** – which we will read about next week
- And v17 – **God will use these three appointments to ensure that all who have turned away from God will be punished!**

From this – Elijah can see that – God has plans for him and God is not disappointed in Elijah – Elijah can also see – that **God will not allow Israel’s idolatry and apostasy to go unpunished**. There will be **justice**. What great encouragement to Elijah!

Application: For us it means – no matter what evil, anti-God and anti-Christian agendas there are in a world – it’s encouraging for us to know - God will one day bring about justice and punish evil.

Application: For us also – God’s dealings with Elijah here show us that when we are broken – we need periods of spiritual repair – we need a time alone with God to be “re-paired” and then “pre-pared” for whatever God has planned for us to do next.

So, let’s not beat ourselves up when we’re feeling broken – but instead – cherish that alone time with God – to be refreshed!

When we are broken – God shows us grace (1 Kings 19:18)

Did we notice that **God wasn’t angry with Elijah** for running away?

Did we notice **God didn’t give Elijah a hard time?**

Which brings us to the third point – When we are broken – **God shows us grace**

[Slide 2c-grace]

One of Elijah’s concerns was *“he was the only one left”* – even though this wasn’t true – **in his brokenness Elijah thought that!**

God listens and answers – see v18

And says *“Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel – all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and whose mouths have not kissed him”*

What grace and mercy – it's like God is saying "***Elijah – see - you're not alone***"

In His grace – **God preserves a remnant of faithful believers.**

Application: For us it means – in God's grace - in our nation – through Jesus' church – there will always be a faithful remnant who continue to believe in our Lord Jesus – and there is nothing that any Jezebel can do about it – God will preserve a remnant!

Conclusion (2 Corinthians 12:1-10)

Speaking of God's grace – in our NT reading this morning

[\[Please turn to 2 Corinthians 12:1-10\]](#)

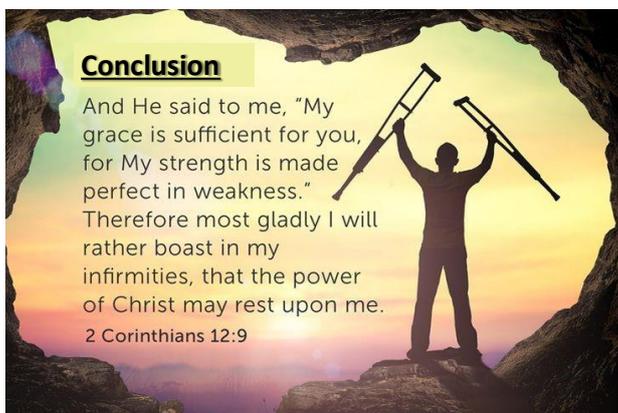
We have **another servant of God** – the **Apostle Paul** –

Paul too – had a number of trials in his service to the Lord – he was **rejected, persecuted, shipwrecked, beaten and put in jail**

Yet we read here in v3-4 – **God dealt graciously with Paul too** – even bringing him up to Heaven to have a glimpse of what paradise is like – so Paul would be encouraged in his ministry.

And even though – **Paul had** – what he describes as a **thorn in his flesh** – v7 – which we don't know what it was. And even though – v8 - **Paul prayed 3 times for the Lord to take it away from him.**

[\[Slide 3-Conclusion\]](#)



The Lord had other ideas – He **didn't answer Paul's prayer** – because it wasn't the Lord's will – instead the Lord simply said: "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness"

What the Lord is saying - to Paul – and to Elijah – and to us - when we're broken – the Lord is saying “*My power is strongest when you are weak*”.

And so, Paul in v10 – **is able to delight in his weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions etc** – because then in his weak state – the Lord's strength – makes him strong.

Application: You see when we are truly broken – we truly depend on God – and we truly hand over control of our lives to Him – and we truly rely on His strength – instead of foolishly thinking we can do things in our own strength.

Ultimately - isn't that why God sent Jesus – because humankind was completely broken – unable to stop sinning and rebelling against God – and heading for death – and heading for eternal separation from God – by being cast into Hell.

But God says “*My grace is sufficient for you – SINNER – for my power – [in sending Jesus to die on a cross is able to take your sins away and give forgiveness] – for my power – [in raising Jesus to life to offer all who believe, eternal life] – my power is made perfect in your weakness – SINNER. You're too weak and broken to save yourself – but in my grace I will save you!*”

What amazing grace!

Let's pray...

Heavenly Father – thank you that you graciously deal with us when we are broken.

You provide all we need both physically and spiritually.

Help us to listen to your gentle whisper as you speak to us directly – and as you speak to us through your creation – and through your word.

Thank you for the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ – who overcame our brokenness – by His death and resurrection. In His name, we pray. Amen!

Benediction (Philippians 4:12-13)

¹² I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. ¹³ I can do all this through him who gives me strength. Amen.